



Kemp's Point

Volume 10, Number 2, October 2009

News from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Kemp Natural Resources Station

On Being an Early Bird

By Ethan Bowen

I am 17 years old and consider myself to be a pretty fortunate kid to have spent a summer living at Kemp Natural Resources Station. My name is Ethan Bowen and thanks to a few great connections, I was lucky enough to get a job for the summer based out of Kemp NRS. In April of this year, a group of engineering students from UW Madison came to Rhinelander to visit some area factories. They also stopped by the Rhinelander Ag Research Station for a tour. It also just so happens that I call this farm my home. After meeting the group, I joined them for part of the tour along with my dad Bryan Bowen (RARS superintendent) and brother Aaron. The group invited our family to dinner at Kemp where they were staying.

After dinner, my dad encouraged me to talk to Tom Steele about a project that I could volunteer for or get a job with to gain some experience in my field of interest, natural resources. He pointed me toward Amber Roth who has spent the past two years doing a study out of Michigan Tech. on Golden Winged Warblers and other woodland birds in aspen re-growth sites. I talked to Amber and she hired me as one of her technicians for her third field season.



My experience at Kemp Station started before summer had actually come. I still had several weeks of school left when Amber and her crew headed for the woods so I could only work on weekends. I would head to Kemp on Friday evenings and stay until Sunday

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Looking Back...Looking Ahead

By Ron Hull

January is named after the Roman god Janus with two heads — one looking back, and one looking ahead.

I worked on Amber Roth's PhD study the last 3 summers at Kemp Station. My name is Ron Hull and I am now 61 years old. My passion for birds dates to the early 1970's when I completed a BS degree in Biology and early retirement in 1997 allowed me to do bird research



Ron (left) and Amber conduct a transect survey.

ever since. 2009 completed my 13th consecutive year. I knew of Amber since about 1995 and more directly from 2001 through 2006 while collecting data for Cornell University on Golden Winged Warblers. Amber was the Wisconsin coordinator for that project. But we did not work together; I collected data and sent her reports.

Prior to 2007, when I began working on Amber's PhD study, I worked mostly alone — just me and God and the creatures. Since I covered large areas of the state, I slept in my truck and washed up in the woods. I wasn't sure what it would be like living and working with college kids, half of them females, including Amber. I soon found out...

The research goal was to compare bird nesting success in 3 types of young growth Aspen. Amber and I did

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Early Bird *(Cont'd from Page 1)*

afternoon. At this point, summer weather was also on hold. At 4:30 am when we left the station, temps. weren't much over freezing. As soon as the sun came out, however, the temperature slowly climbed to the 60's (on a warm day). Unfortunately, warmth wasn't the only thing that came out with the sun. As the dew dried off the leaves, the ticks invaded. I have never seen so many ticks in my life! And I've spent a considerable amount of time in what I used to think were tick infested woods.

Once school ended, I moved up to the Station and began working full time. The month of June was spent searching for nests and monitoring nests we had already found. We spent the days watching pairs of birds and searching through cover that likely contained nests. I never would have imagined how many nests these woods contained. During the month of July and into August when birds' nesting activity had slowed, we collected vegetation data on the birds' territorial and nesting habitats. This involved taking inventory of what plants grew in the area, how tall they were, and what kind of cover the birds built their nests in.

Though work occupied most of my time, I still had a lot of free time in the evenings. The one thing that dominated this time was fishing. I fished more this past summer than I have in the past several years combined. The sport filled my time and my belly. Then there was swimming, or more specifically, jumping off of the top story of the boat house/ classroom. Nothing cools you off after a hot days work like a 20 foot free fall and then a big splash into clear water!

Looking back at the duration of the summer, I can see how fortunate I am to have had such a great experience at such a young age. More than a few other students commented on how good it was that I was getting a head start in pursuing my career interests. Living away from home for the summer also taught me how to take care of myself and take responsibility for myself. It gave me a taste of what it will be like when I head off to college. I am extremely grateful for the great summer I had. I extend a special thanks to Tom and the rest of the Kemp employees for the wonderful work they do to keep the Station running, and also to Amber for teaching me what field work is all about. 🐿



Upper left: A close-up of the ovenbird nest, which is well-disguised as a tussock of grass on the forest floor.

Above: The roof of the ovenbird nest is pulled back to reveal a nest of baby voles a layer above the abandoned ovenbird eggs. (Photos by Ron Hull)

Left: Visiting researcher, Marisol Escaño, captured this photo of the eggshells in the woodcock nest while Amber banded the baby woodcocks.



Looking... (Cont'd from Page 1)

transect surveys which involved walking a marked trail of 250 meters, recording all birds heard and seen. One of us was the Primary, calling out the birds, while the other recorded the data. On the next transect we switched roles. The method caught any personal bias because the recorder also wrote down birds the Primary missed. While we did transects, the rest of the crew monitored nests and searched for new ones. We all met at mid-day to continue nest searching and mist net Golden-Winged Warblers (GW's), a species of major concern due to declining numbers.

Chestnut-sided Warbler, Woodcock, Rose Breasted Grosbeak, Ruffed Grouse, Eastern Towhee, White Throated Sparrow, and several other species studied are on lists of concern. Golden-Wings were part of Amber's Master's study and also emphasized in this research. They were banded, blood samples taken for DNA analysis at Cornell (they interbreed with Blue Wing Warblers) and finding their nests was a high priority.

While doing transects we discovered I could only hear Golden Wings in my right ear. Thus, they were always on my 'right.' Since the transect methodology required giving a distance and location for all species on lists of concern (including GW's), that was not good. Amber assured me the computer model would correct for this, but I still felt bad about it. A big reason why I retired early had come to pass: as a person ages their hearing deteriorates. After 2007 I switched to just nest searching.

Picture yourself moving through thick clumps of 15'

Aspen and thick clumps of waist-high Hazelnut, while trying to keep from crashing through a slash pile; while trying NOT to step on any unseen ground nest, and you get some idea of nest searching. Nest monitoring can lead predators like chipmunks, Crows, and Blue Jays, to a nest. Other furred creatures can merely follow your scent trail. Amber's training emphasized: Don't leave a dead end trail, i.e., don't just walk up to the nest, turn around and walk back. Keep going past the nest.

Singing males indicate territories. Follow females and birds carrying nesting material. Something skittering away on the ground is probably a female leaving a ground nest. Move slow. My favorite method is to just sit on a stump for 30 minutes and observe. That derived from 35 years in a bow stand.

Monitoring a nest is like being part of the family. I want my 'grandkids' to hatch and fledge. I checked 2 Ruffed Grouse nests from a distance so I wouldn't flush them. Their camouflage is so perfect; I used binoculars to locate their eyes. I was as relieved as the hens when both nests hatched successfully. An egg in one nest didn't hatch but there was a small hole in it. I took it back for the crew to look at. Amber figured the baby had tried to get out (the hole), but couldn't and died. I placed the remains under a Tamarack tree near a bog. One of those sad things...And I am a grouse hunter...

A White Throated Sparrow injured a wing in our mist net and couldn't fly. After a call to Amber, who was at another site, we took it to Northwoods Wildlife Center in

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Save The Date! Kemp Station Turns 50!

2010 marks the 50th anniversary of the Kemp Natural Resources Station. The year was 1960 when Susan Spencer-Small and Sally Greenleaf made the most generous donation of land and buildings to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Their gift created Kemp Station to serve "as a research and educational center" dedicated to the conservation of our natural resources.

Thousands of people have passed through Kemp Station over the intervening years –scientists working on research projects, students attending field courses, or friends and neighbors participating in outreach events. No matter what the reason, all experienced the distinct beauty of this special place called "Kemp."

To commemorate our anniversary, we invite you to

attend an Open House & Reunion on August 21, 2010. There will be food and fun as we celebrate 50 years of natural resources research and education. This will be a great opportunity to reconnect with fellow Kemp "alums," share your favorite Kemp stories, tour Station grounds and facilities, and learn about the ongoing programs of research and teaching taking place at the Station.

Event details and a registration form will come out next spring. But, we hope you will mark your calendar and hold the date now. It's going to be a fine celebration.

Best wishes for a grand autumn and I look forward to seeing you in 2010!

-- Tom Steele



On Time Travel and Dreams

By Karla Ortman

Have you ever traveled through time? Neither have I, but I'm certain we come close more often than we realize. It happens when you see, hear, or smell something that instantly transports you back to an experience, a moment you had earlier in life. You might suddenly feel 8 years old again, just for a moment. It's magical when it happens and sometimes you can hold on to the moment for two moments, if you're lucky.

That's what happened to me one morning in May during migration when I caught sight of a male scarlet tanager flying over head. I was walking the dogs and the red bird with its striking black wings flew across the open expanse above the road. I was transported back to third grade when we went to the Madison School Forest. That's where I first learned about scarlet tanagers. I don't think we actually saw one, we may have heard one, but I remember feeling so smart about knowing this

new bird. And we colored a picture of it.

In fact, I still have the picture, in "My Nature Book," which we made after the trip. The book is made up of mimeographed pages featuring birds, tree leaves, and wildflowers that we colored. For the birds, we also made notes about their food and nesting habits. Just looking at the mimeographed, or "ditto," pages provides for some time travel – remember how they smelled? Or how they'd be warm and damp if they had just been made?

According to my notes from May 13, 1975, scarlet tanagers feed in the tree tops and eat beetles, moths and caterpillars. Their nest looks like a saucer and is made of fine twigs and weeds. I made a special note that in the fall, the male changes to the olive and yellow color of the female.

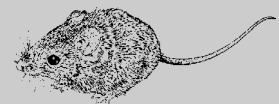
Today I find it interesting that the scarlet tanager is a fairly common bird in Wisconsin. If you do not know its call, you may never know it's there because it spends much of it's time in the tree tops. Listen for its chip-burr call in the spring, and then grab the binoculars. I see now that my sighting was truly one of luck.

There are 74 tanager species in North America, and only one, the scarlet tanager, is common to Wisconsin, making it a pretty unique bird for our state. Sometimes a Western or Summer tanager is spotted, but that's rare or accidental. According to the ATLAS of Breeding Birds of Wisconsin, the scarlet tanager is doing pretty well here, with confirmed or probable breeding

occurring in nearly every county.

I have fond memories of my grade school trips to the school forest. It's where I learned about trilliums, Dutchman's breeches, and the scarlet tanager. I hope today's grade schoolers are having similar experiences, learning their wildflowers and birds so that one day, they too can travel back through time.

It was about 2:30 am when I awoke to the call of a barred owl. It was the distinctive "who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all." The call was deep and mellow, suggesting the male of the species. Barred owls vocalize all year, so this particular call was likely of a bird that was disturbed, maybe reminding someone of his territory. I lay awake and listened because it was so loud. I "spoke" along with the call in my head: "who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all" – pause – "who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all" – pause – he continued a few more rounds and then finished with "who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all, who." It was quiet. I fell asleep and dreamed of cooking. 🐭



Mouse On Over

We invite you to visit Kemp Station's newly revised outreach page on-line. There you can find:

- Upcoming outreach sessions.
- Past issues of Kemp's Point
- Hamilton Roddis Lectures
- Internet resources for various natural resource topics

Go to www.kemp.wisc.edu
Click on OUTREACH



Looking... (Cont'd from Page 3)

Minocqua. When we all met at Kemp, Amber got the full story and did some fast thinking: It was a female, we knew where the nest was, Northwoods had an incubator, the male could not hatch and raise the young alone, and there was a thunderstorm coming. Amber and I jumped in the car — that girl can drive! We beat the storm, I grabbed the nest and away we went! As we are Dale Earnhardt to town, it's 70F out, the heater is blasting and she hollers to hold the eggs by the vent. After a bit I am sweating big time. Then she yells that I am cooking the eggs. I may not be that bright, but I didn't say a word. I sure wanted to though. We got the eggs (and us) safely to Northwoods. They hatched but didn't survive. Mom White Throat recovered and was released at the site a few weeks later.....

One oddity was an Ovenbird nest. Ovenbirds are named after their nests which resemble a Dutch oven or igloo. The top is covered and it has an igloo-like entrance. When I checked the nest later, I saw a Meadow Vole run away from near the nest. I couldn't see into the nest so finally pulled some of it apart and there were baby voles on top of some nest material and below them were the Ovenbird eggs. A Meadow Vole/Ovenbird Condo! The Vole appropriated the nest from the Ovenbird. I put the nest back together and left.

Major multi-tasker Amber also bands Woodcock. I flushed a Woodcock which flew in the manner indicating a nest or young — it flew low, legs hanging down as if injured and only went a short distance. Then the work begins. You have to examine every leaf and blade of grass with your eyes. The young are camouflaged and will not move so you don't want to step on them. I located three young and called Amber. I left so the

mother could return and keep them warm. The cavalry arrived. We found Mom brooding the young within 5' of where I first found them. Only this time they had returned to the actual nest they had just recently hatched from! A rare find. Amber banded and released them. They are the oddest, cutest things with their coloration and the miniature long beak. But best of all, Marisol Escana from Columbia, South America, who was visiting/helping us for a few weeks, got to see and hold her first ever baby Woodcocks.

My Kemp experience is one that I am glad I did not miss. I admire people who put their working lives on hold to continue their education. Amber is one of those and I hope she reaps the benefits of all her hard work. Our crew was about 10 people per year, most of them college students. A few were there for 2 years, but most went on to other things. Of the total of about 22+ different people that were involved about half were females. I know women today are more involved in what was once considered man's work. My Kemp experience showed me that to be true, not only in Amber's crew, but with all the other research going on there. I have 3 kids that are grown and on their own. My time at Kemp was like having a whole bunch of new Kids.

The study was only 3 years, yet it seems like I aged a decade. And in a sense I did. I was 58 in 2006. I am now in a new decade. To put it another way: Ethan Bowen who was on our crew this year is 17. Compute the age he was when I started doing research in 1997... Then add in some hearing loss. My Janus uses the head looking back, more than ahead. The Kids are using the Janus head looking forward. And if you wonder: "What is with kids these days?" Go to Kemp for a few days and help out a crew. 🧢



It was a successful year for the Wisconsin's Covert's Project, a woodland wildlife management program for private landowners.

Two sessions were held in August at Kemp Station, with a total of 53 landowners participating, representing 38 properties. Above left, Amber Roth leads the group on a field forestry tour. At right, David Drake explains how to set up a point count to survey songbirds. (Photos by Judy Peters and Peter McSweeney, respectively.)





Kemp Profile: Dan Haskell

Hometown:

Springville, Iowa, a small farming community in east-central Iowa, 30 miles east of Cedar Rapids, nestled between the wild,

meandering Wapsipinicon and Cedar Rivers.

Area of study:

I have just finished a Master of Science degree in Applied Ecology from the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Sciences at Michigan Technological University (MTU) in Houghton, MI (that is in the U.P. Eh!).

Your 2009 field crew:

There were several folks who assisted me this year. They included one full-time field technician from MTU Adam Komar, one part time student intern from Nicolet College, Matt Ferge, many volunteers from the United Church of Christ's Moon Beach Camp, three techs from Amber Roth's crew: Chris Wass, Kevin King, and Ethan Bowen, who helped when Amber did not have them busy with tasks. The North Lakeland Discovery Center's Bird Club members conducted bird surveys, and Gary Milanoski and two student interns (Andy & Josh) from Northland College assisted in the frog surveys.

What question does your field research answer?:

My project is part of a long term research question: "Does restoring shoreland buffer zones (35' from OHWM) to private properties on lakes in Vilas County provide habitat to wildlife?" In the past three summers I have worked with several property owners on Found, Moon, and Lost lakes in the St. Germain area. I conducted breeding bird, small mammal, furbearer, amphibian, and vegetation surveys before restoration took place and will continue to monitor the progress of the restoration to see how wildlife respond in the next ten years, depending on funding. In addition, there are several short term questions that I am answering. For example, I tested the benefits of the addition of down woody material (DWM) to these restoration sites to see if DWM would increase plant survival and growth rates. The results indicated that DWM increased the soil moisture and I had insignificant difference in plant growth on specific plant species compared to sites without DWM. Furthermore, I compared the survival and growth rates of six native shrub species which were either in nursery containers (2-3 gallon pots) and bare

root gravel culture plants. The gravel culture shrubs are less expensive and could be an added benefit to a tight budget when it comes to restoration projects in the future. I found no significant difference in survival and one species revealed a significant difference in growth rates for the first year of the study. These shrubs will also be monitored in the coming years.

How is your research/project funded?:

There are many contributors to this project. The WDNR-Science Services covered the majority of the expenses, but WI-Department of Agriculture/Trade/Consumer Protection (DATCP), Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department, Wisconsin Society of Ornithology, MTU's Ecosystem Science Center, MTU's Graduate Student Council, and Hanson's Garden Village also contributed.

Describe a typical day of field work:

Depending on the time of year, a day may be spent gathering data on lake shores on vegetation or various wildlife species throughout the year. Likewise, a day may be spent planting native plant species of Wisconsin which includes trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses. We also installed bioengineering techniques to control erosion occurring on shorelines. Examples of bioengineering techniques include, biologs, envor-loc bags, straw and coconut

mats, and rain gardens/retention ponds. We also installed and maintain an herbivore abatement fence around the restoration sites which are in place for the first two years after planting. Finally, we spent time



maintaining an irrigation system at restoration sites due to the drought conditions and sandy soils that plague the Northwoods. My summers are extremely busy and I rely a lot on my help to be independent and thorough.

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Profile (Cont'd from Page 6)

What's the biggest challenge you've faced working on this project?:

I am not sure if there is one lone big challenge, but several less challenging ones. One was gaining the trust of the property owners. I can't say enough about how great it has been to work with these folks. They are truly concerned for the health of the lake they live on. Other challenges would be getting all the participating partners on the same page, coordinating all the biological surveys while conducting the restorations projects, the lack of rain fall, and getting enough sleep! I found that I need several cups of coffee in the morning to get through the day and complete the required tasks.

What has been your favorite part of working on this project?:

Noticing how the property owners have become more aware of their surroundings and their involvement in this project. Several times property owners have told me

about a bird, mammal or frog that they have observed and a few have started keeping their own records. The volunteers from Moon Beach Camp helped out at critical times this summer and several endured inclement weather along with us, allowing us to get the job completed when I was having doubts it would get done.

What is next for you?

I will continue to work on this project as long as I am needed. The future of this project is dependent on funding which is all ways in jeopardy. I hope I can still work in the natural resource field in the coming years.

When you're old and gray, what will you tell your grandkids about this project?

I hope I can tell them that I made a difference in how people look at their surroundings and taught them how they can preserve the beauty of northwood lakes for future generations. And I hope that I can say this project helped to bridge the gap between government agencies, academia and the private property owners. 🐼



Wildlife Ecology camp, a 2-week intensive field course, was held at Kemp Station in May. Above, Dr. Tim Van Deelen shows a student how to use a capture gun for tranquilizing wildlife in order to collect samples, attach a radio collar, etc. Below, Dr. Van Deelen teaches the students about carnivore live trapping techniques, demonstrating a cubby set for fisher and bobcat.



The first annual Beyond BOW For the Love of Loon program was held at Kemp Station in July. Twelve women, ranging in age from approximately 30 to 70 years participated, including two pairs of mother and daughter (one mom all the way from Ithaca, NY). The program included talks by WDNR biologist Mike Meyer, who also led the group in loon banding outings and LoonWatch's Stacy Craig, who spoke on loon myths and legends. Program planner, Judith Bloom (pictured at center, holding a loon chick), reported that the group had "...an absolutely fantastic weekend" and that they plan to hold the program again next year. BOW, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, is a program of UW-Stevens Point. For more information, visit www.uwsp.edu/cnr/bow/. (Photo by Doug Killian.)

(Wildlife camp photos by Wolfgang Hoffman.)



Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)

If not for the storm in August 2000, which created the forest gap known as “the blowdown,” I may never have learned about the red elderberry. This shrub is also known by many other common names, including red elder and red-berried elder. The gap in the old-growth hemlock forest is now home to a variety of plant species,



from wild red raspberries, to milkweed, to the red elderberry, which is a crowd pleaser among the birds come mid-July when the berries are ripe. In spring, the red elder is decked out in beautiful white flowers, which must be paradise for bees and flies.

Who knew so much life and diversity lay dormant below the old hemlocks? It's neat to think about the birds and mammals that aided in the dispersion of the red elder seeds prior to the storm, and even longer ago. They consumed the berries somewhere, and visited Kemp, depositing the seeds via their excrement. Red elderberry seeds are dormant and must go through a process to prepare them for germination. Passing through the digestive tract of an animal does just this. And so the seeds enter the soil and lay in wait until the day the conditions are right for them to germinate, in this case, sun.

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